1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1337 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

853 Breast-feeding begins on the third day, but if the milk does
[797] not come, the mother goes to a woman "specialist" who
[854] knows the herbs which are believed to induce the flow. When the mother is ill or tubercular, the infant is given to a wet-nurse. Once he has begun to nurse, he is fed whenever he cries, and as soon as he can sit up he is given the same food as
846 the mother eats. For the first two or three months after the
262 birth of her child a woman refrains from eating egg-plant, fresh fish — although she may eat salt fish — white beans or any others larger than Congo peas, pork, lard, and all fruit.
304 The ears of a female child are pierced when she is about a
301 month old for the gold ear-rings which are worn by girls and women of all ages. If the parents cannot afford them at the time, however, thread is placed in the holes until a sum sufficient to provide this important trinket has been accumulated.

856 A child is taught to sit up beginning with the end of the
854 third or fourth month, and by the time he is six or seven months old he can sit quite well; girls are believed to be more precocious than boys in acquiring this skill. When about ten months old, or sooner, an older sister, a little girl, or the father or mother takes the child by the hand and teaches him to walk, later allowing him to hold one end of a stick for sup-
[754] port. A child is never left alone, for fear of the evil eye or of
[789] werewolves, so that a mother does not even cross the threshold of her house without taking her baby with her, while if for some reason she cannot avoid leaving her child while she is in the yard, an empty bottle is placed near its pillow as a protective device. Teething is a matter of importance, since the
856 attitudes of the parents toward a child may be determined by
855 the first teeth to appear. If these are cut in the upper jaw, it is
● 763 said that the child's mother will survive his father, and when this occurs, the mother takes every precaution to conceal the fact from her husband, so he will not hate the child. Others hold, however, that the appearance of an upper tooth first denotes that either the father or the mother is soon to die.[4]

856 Instruction starts early in the life of a child. Beginning with
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1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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The cult of the dead[a] is to be differentiated from the worship of the *loa* and from the twin cult in that its African form has been modified to a far greater extent than these others by the influence of the Catholic Church. Yet, though the modes in which respect is shown the dead are principally those of the Church, the attitudes and beliefs which underlie the cult —the meticulousness with which the tranquillity of the dead is insured, the fear in which they are held, and, above all, their close association with magic as an important sanction behind this force—all these take on a distinctly African tinge. Perhaps the point of view taken toward the dead, and the manner in which the living cope with their power, can best be set forth at the outset by giving a sketch of the pattern of funerary and post-funeral rites, since these form the basis of the entire cult.

Wailing by all present begins with the approach of death. There are cries such as: "*Adieù, bon Dieu, Manman ma-o, wai, wai! Jodi-a tel-ei-tel quitté mouwi! Côté m'ap wé li enco'?* —Good-by, O good God, O my mother, *wai, wai!* Today such-and-such a one has died! Where will I see him again?" The members of the family tie white or black kerchiefs about their waists, while others present use kerchiefs of any color at hand. The doors of any *humfort* or *maison de servitude* in the habitation are closed, and thorny acacia branches are placed in front of them, so that the dead, who are believed to go about everywhere, cannot "spoil" the sacred place by entering it.

The body is laid in a shallow trench dug in the floor of the room, and there washed and prepared for the funeral by a professional *baigneur des morts*—man or woman according to the sex of the dead—and his assistants. Some member of the family watches them to see that the "three drops" of moisture believed to be in every dead person's mouth are not caught on a cloth when the body is turned over, for they are held to have great potency for the working of black magic, and a sorcerer would give a great deal for them. Cold water,

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

beyond the obvious fear of contagion. In his study of Dahomey, Herskovits notes:

> . . . Small-pox is believed to be sent as a punishment for grave offenses in the eyes of these [the Sagbata] deities, and it is taken to indicate that either the dead person himself or a member of his family has committed some heinous crime such as the practice of black magic. A person who dies of small-pox may only be buried after permission has been given by the chief priest of the Earth cult.[20]

Thus, in Haiti, though the connections with the past are clouded, it is clear that victims of lightning and smallpox are treated as a special class of criminals or malefactors.

Ordinary malefactors such as malevolent criminals and murderers—until recent years, at least—were not buried in the common graveyard. They, too, were segregated at the periphery of the cemetery or buried at the edge of a trail or road where the traffic would not permit them to rest and where their graves would be under constant surveillance. The roadside grave sometimes was also the fate of a person killed by lightning.

That these special burials are related to the Dahomean and Yoruban concepts of retribution for crimes against the deities is supported by the similarity of treatment accorded victims of lightning and disease and common criminals. In Haiti, Herskovits observes: "Those who die of small-pox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard," the suicides and criminals being set apart from the others.[21]

Graves found near the seashore, lake shores, or riverbanks frequently are declared to belong to persons who died of drowning.

Approximately nine days after a person's death, the "last prayers" are said, and the soul of the deceased is presumed to have departed from the house. Once more, under the tonnelle outside there are games, storytelling, and singing. On this night, however, there is also drumming and dancing of a special kind. Usually it is the Juba, or Martinique, dance, which is believed to be specially enjoyed by the dead, and it is the older people, rather than the young, who participate. These festivities are believed to give cheer to the deceased and to "encourage" him on his way. On the next night comes the mangé mort, the feast for the family dead, a ritual which continues periodically through the years.

Sometimes in Haiti you may come upon an old tomb or grave before which a dish of specially prepared food has been set. This is part of the mangé mort ritual.

A man may make provision in advance of his death for the rites which follow his burial. He may designate special animals to be killed, leave

[20] [Ibid., pp. 397–398. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.—Analyst]

[21] [Herskovits, Life in a Haitian Valley, p. 214. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.—Analyst]

763 764 special funds to defray expenses, or even set a day for the "last prayers"; and it is said that misfortune is likely to overtake his family if his wishes are not carried out. Métraux cites a story of a man who had told his wife 763 764 784 that if he should happen to die on a Sunday she should hold "last prayers" for him on a Tuesday. It happened to be a Tuesday when the man died.

> They held the burial in the afternoon. As they began the prayers on Wednesday, the last prayer finished on Wednesday week. But as Brother Lédan had always said they should hold his last prayer on a Tuesday, his wife was quite willing to hold it Tuesday. One Tuesday when everyone knew that the last prayer was being held, his wife heard her brother-in-law who told her that wasn't customarily done [that is, shortening the period of prayers]. Then she put off the last prayer.
>
> Thereupon, according to the story, two strangers appeared in the house. They were offered chairs and they sat down. Suddenly, one of the men arose and said that the woman had announced that a last prayer was to be said that day. She said she had put it off. Then the other man got up and said: "Wasn't it today I ordered you to hold the last prayer?" The woman asked, "Who are you?" But both men disappeared. The woman fell unconscious, and died three days later.[22]

769 The cycle of honoring, encouraging, and placating the spirits of the dead moves continuously. There is no beginning and no end. Although those who have died are no longer seen, they are part of the great community which encompasses those whose names are remembered and those who are forgotten, including ancestors who never left the shores [761] of Africa. Death is merely another aspect of life, and its forces are ever present.

22 [Hall and others, op. cit., p. 193. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]